HURRICANE DESIGNED
by Karen E. Lee

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Art

Utah State University
Logan, Utah
1980
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ABSTRACT

Hurricane Designed
by Karen E. Lee, Master of Fine Arts
Utah State University, 1980
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Hurricane Designed is a project that deals with advertising graphics, their forms and adaptations, and relates them to their environment. Herein is an explanation of the development and procedures of this project as it grew out of an interest in natural history and a pursuit of elegance in design. The result is this plan for a community identity based on environmental and historical perspective.
REVIEW OF RESOURCES

Hurricane Designed is a project which evolved out of two distinct periods of training: my undergraduate major in biology which emphasized ecology and zoology, and my graduate school training in advertising design. It is a graphic design program that relates the commercial aspects of life in a community to the environment and thereby creates a synergism that enhances the interdependence of man and the land.

As an undergraduate, I was taught the basic principles of multiple land use, wildlife and range management, and ecology. For three years I studied animals and their environments, behavior and evolution, so it was only natural that when my attention was turned to advertising design, my background in natural science would emerge in my work.

I am concerned with the visual effects of signage and printed matter and their relationship to their surroundings. It seems to me that we suffer from a severe lack of good advertising in all the media, and that the proliferation of advertising junk is especially detrimental to the cerebral health of a community as it pertains to the cityscape. This proliferation of bad design on the horizon inures the consumer to additional bad design, resulting in a self-perpetuating condition of mediocrity which is worsened by the observation that good design costs no more than bad design (Johnson, 1980). This project demonstrates how good design might be developed on a community level to enhance the relationship of man to his environment.

Though the term "environmental graphics" goes back only about fifteen years, the idea is ancient. Whoever painted the frieze on the Parthenon created a graphic representation totally in keeping with the building it adorned. Good design has always striven for this blend (Carpenter, 1975), and good environmental design strives not only for such a blend, but seeks a synergy between the man and the man-made (Abercrombie, 1977;
Carpenter, 1975). The difference between environmental design and the older design professions is more an attitude than a difference in skills. The environmental designer is aware that technological advances may be accompanied by unforeseen complications, and views the environment as a rather delicate tapestry liable to change with the introduction of foreign elements (Ferebee, 1970). His profession is one that deals with the sensitivities of the land and the sensibilities of the consuming public.

The basis for good design in environmental graphics, as well as more traditional graphics, is clear communication (Abercrombie, 1977; Elber, 1978; Gaiser, 1973; Herbert, 1972; Henrion, 1967; Johnson, 1980; McIlhaney, 1970; Roseman, 1978), with an increasing dependence on nonverbal symbolism. Indeed, a large portion of environmental design is signage, but there is more to it than that. Wall murals, kiosks, placquards, banners, fountains, sculpture, even benches may find their way into the designer’s problem.

At some point in the process, environmental design ceases to be merely the problem of the graphic designer, and begins to require the collaboration of the architect, the engineer, the social scientist, and the Department of the Interior. Very often, in fact, it is a group effort that integrates multi-level disciplines and can result in the optimum use of the environment without damaging it as well as a visually pleasing, efficient human environment.

The comprehensive plan for the future of Dallas, rooted in an ecological study of the area, is such a project. Although the Dallas plan starts with ecological data, it does not stop there. The ecological study was used to determine transit corridors, and what began as the design persuasion has become regulation and policy for city government (Chermayeff, 1973).

This example points out that environmental design is far more complex than simple graphics cosmetics. It employs, of necessity, professionals in practically every area of human endeavor, but the role of the graphic designer is that of finisher. It is the graphic designer who ices the cake.
In the last few years, some cakes have been iced more elegantly than others. Budgets and scope of project are limiting factors, as in any graphic problem. Two projects that are particularly appropriate to the problem addressed by this designer are the Costa Smeralda Consortium on the coast of Sardinia, designed by Herman and Lees Associates of Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the Missouri Botanical Garden, designed by Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum, Inc., of Saint Louis. The Costa Smeralda project involves planners as well as architects, and the botanical garden involves an architectural firm. Both projects are examples of environmental design at its very best.

The designers of the Costa Smeralda project were commissioned to do a complete program—including corporate identity guidebooks, tourist pamphlets, road and street signs, etc.—for a consortium turning a string of villages on a 35-mile coastal stretch of Sardinia into a resort. Until the designers were called in, growth had been haphazard, and there was a screaming need to untangle and coordinate. Herman and Lees recommended a quiet identity for the consortium companies, using a symbol adapted from a Sardinian motif. Rather than put signs on straight, stark poles, they designed for a treatment with a historical precedent. All the signs in the village—village numbers, street names, directional signs, village and district names—are sandblasted into hunks of natural granite, which is abundant in the hills above the villages and finds a close relationship to ancient Roman road markers which were cut in stone. This solution blends well with the environment as well as the history of the region.

Attention to historical precedence and cultural integrity is a pervasive feature of this project. Every effort has been made to protect the administrative, natural, and architectural integrity of the development, and the results seem to be most satisfying (Print Casebooks I, 1975).

The Missouri Botanical Garden posed a more limited problem: to impose a fairly extensive signing system on a garden, with minimal disruption of the peace and beauty of the natural scene. The aim was to give the signing as low a profile as possible, except around some of the special facilities, where display and celebration were in order. Quite a lot of information had to be conveyed to make sure that a 79-acre botanical garden would be fully understood and properly used by its visitors, and its plant life protected as far as possible from the ill-effects of ignorance or vandalism. In addition to garden identification, directional and control signs, and architectural signing around the buildings had to be designed, and done in such a way as to bridge a compendium of architectural styles while announcing a number of different facilities and special displays.
The designers chose bronze and acrylic garden signs and directories which were canted out over the ground so that people poring over them could study the information and plant motifs against a background of leaves and grass. Craw Clarendon type is used throughout—mostly in white—on clear or bronze backgrounds, but brilliant tones of blue, green, yellow, and red have been introduced in the banners, entry kiosks, and posters which announce such attractions as the plant shop or the garden restaurant. Perimeter garden signs are post-and-panel fiberglass, bronze, and aluminum construction. Chrome-plated brass, photo-engraved bronzed dye transfer prints, subsurface printed vinyl and acrylic are used for the artwork and architectural signing within the buildings. Says the chief designer, Charles Reay, "The testing by prototype was extraordinarily important in determining the environmental impact of the signs, which can only be thought of as an intrusion in a garden" (Print Casebooks 3, 1978). In fact, a sign system of such sensitivity executed with so deft a hand, might well be considered an asset rather than an intrusion. As the translucent surfaces are touched by mist and rain, they become a part of the scenery, reflecting the changing seasons, their bold white letters enlivening the bleak winter afternoons (Braybrooke, 1978).

Following these examples, I have patterned a project for myself: to give visual unity to the village of Hurricane, Utah, a very small community which lies roughly half-way between Zion National Park and St. George, Utah, in the Mojave Desert. I chose this site for its size, its potential for growth, and because I felt an affinity for the name and the locale. The project would cover the cosmetic end of environmental design—road and street signs, shop signs and business identities, promotional brochures, etc., and would coordinate them in a way that would enhance the livability of the town and play up the environment.
CREATIVE PROCEDURES

The problems associated with designing an entire town vary with individual shops, of course, but are compounded by the need to unite those separate businesses in a way that allows for individuality and contributes to the designed effect of the entire town. In order to achieve an overall look, criteria were established to guide the development of each separate project. New designs would (1) relate to the original image of the establishment, (2) relate in some way to local environment or history, and (3) work effectively in comparison with competing designed images independently of local color. The question of how to handle the village’s signage was answered by the following criteria: (1) no signs would be constructed or allowed that would obstruct views or in any other way detract from the natural scenery, and (2) whenever possible, signs would conform to the principle of honesty of materials. That is, materials used in construction would be chosen for their specific qualities appropriate to the expressive character of the sign.

I had originally planned to build a scale model of the town, complete with cliffs and vegetation, but was forced to abandon that idea when it became apparent that my model would have to be as big as a house to show any detail at all. Instead, I silkscreened the new designs onto bronze plexiglass and did dye-marker and colored pencil rough indications to show some of the specific applications for each case. Beyond these generalizations, each specific design was treated on an individual basis and is dealt with separately in the following pages. The separate cases are the village of Hurricane, Graff Mercantile & I.G.A., Zion’s Emporium, Swan Motel, Hurricane Lamps etc., Solaire, Skyhawk Helicopters, and Valley Metals.
VILLAGE OF HURRICANE

Designing an information system for an entire community, no matter how small, is a complicated problem. In addition to designing the city logo and mark, there should also be comprehensive plans for road and street signage, including projected growth patterns for signage, tourist pamphlets and informational brochures, public information kiosks, bulletin boards, and whatever else may become necessary as the project develops. I wanted to give the village of Hurricane a warm, friendly, personal image that would be crisp and clean and blend well with the rural atmosphere. I began with thumbnail sketches of ideas that might be used as a city mark. The initial roughs considered ways of using the letter 'H' and combining sun, sandstone cliffs, and wind in various combinations, and progressed to variations of the sun alone, as it proved to be the strongest visual element both in my drawings and in the Hurricane scheme of things.

Gradually, I developed a mark which succeeded in combining the sun with the spiral wind movement associated with hurricanes. Richard Bold was selected as the typeface for its legibility and suitability to the casual, rustic ambiance of the place. All of the town's public signs were designed to conform to one of two types: either sandblasted into hunks of natural sandstone, or etched into glass. Road markers, street signs, city limit signs, and public building identification signs would fall into the sandblasted sandstone category, and indoor information and identification signs would be etched into either clear or bronze glass or plexiglass. The sandstone treatment ties the city to its sandstone cliffs while presenting a quiet, subtle presence of community; as does the etched glass treatment for indoor signage, although on an even more soft spoken level. Public information brochures would show an environmental sensitivity consistent with signage—muted colors, rich textures, and simplicity of design.
ZION'S EMPORIUM

This small store deals in books, drugs, veterinary, and photographic supplies, and has an old-fashioned fountain. The diversity of the store's merchandise, coupled with the typical old western general store atmosphere projected by old western movies, prompted me to design a logo that works without benefit of pictograms. The typeface is Mapant, chosen for its old west flavor and legibility. The logo's color adaptation for signage reflects the color scheme of the Hurricane horizon, fading from reddish brown to turquoise blue, and could be executed in carved and painted wood, stained glass, or painted glass. A line adaptation would be used for newspaper advertising, stationery, price tags, sacking, receipts, bills, and invoices. The color version could be silkscreened onto work aprons, bowling jackets, and t-shirts.
GRAFF MERCANTILE & I.G.A.

This is the other general store in Hurricane, and it sells everything that Zion's Emporium doesn't. One half of the store handles dry goods with heavy emphasis on levis, cowboy hats, shirts with snaps instead of buttons, bolts of gingham and calico, and galvanized buckets. The other half of the store sells groceries. Fly fans circulate the air on hot days, when the doors are propped open and the flies come in. To preserve that flavor of time stood still, Stencil Antique was chosen as the typeface, and the entire store was designed for the walls, bins, counters, and kegs to echo the rustic old marketplace with pine panelling throughout and sign stencilling on a 30° angle. Canvas banners identify the aisles, and a canvas awning shades the shop's windows. The 30° skewing of all the signs is consistent throughout the interior as well as exterior applications and advertising material.
SWAN MOTEL

This motel's old sign had a swan-shaped S capital on a tomato red and navy blue background. Aside from being ugly, it clashed with the scenery. In keeping with the mark criterion of preserving the original image of the establishment, the swan was retained, but designed through a series of abstractions into a discrete symbol. Two typefaces were considered: Baskerville Swash and Serif Gothic. Baskerville is a light, friendly face that suggested the mom-and-pop image of the motel without becoming too small-time, but Serif Gothic was chosen for its more even letter weight and copperplate affinities that tied it to the old western look as well as current typographic trends. The new design calls for a subtler approach to signage that is consistent with the city's signing system—sandblasted sandstone road signs and engraved glass indoors. Together, mark and logo would be used on stationery, promotional brochures, key chains, matchbook covers, bills, and soap wrappers. By itself, the swan emblem could be adapted to designer sheets and pillowcases, bedspreads, towels, ice buckets, plastic glasses, cocktail napkins, aprons, uniforms, and coveralls.
HURRICANE LAMPS ETC.

An appliance store, this establishment specializes in lighting. The frosted glass technique discussed above is ideal for the store window sign, reminiscent of the cut glass decoration of some of its merchandise while providing an unobstructed view to windowshoppers perusing the merchant's goods. Art Gothic was chosen as the typeface for its historical affinities and appropriateness to the name of the store. The accompanying mark is a simplification of a hurricane lamp, and is designed to provide a color accent to the logo. Outline and solid versions of the logo could be used interchangeably for promotional literature, price tags, invoices, receipts, stationery, name tags, smocks, and newspaper ads.
SOLAIRe

This place was originally Hurricane Solar Heating Lab, but with the expanding range of possibilities in solar power systems, it was decided to leave the "heat" factor out of the name and capitalize on the double entendre of "Solaire." The problem here was to endow a very small firm with a great amount of corporate credibility via visual design in order to enhance their ability to compete with similar corporations on a national scale. Since solar air conditioning systems can function either to heat or cool, and are dependent on the sun alone for power, I decided that the most powerful visual image could only be the sun itself. After several false starts that tried to combine the idea of energy with the sun (an idea that, after some thought, was painfully redundant), I finally came up with an ellipsoid sun that grades from solid, intense orange to cool gray shade, thus implying the dual function of the product. At the same time, the sun image reinforces the local imagery as per the Hurricane mark. The typeface chosen, Earth, contrasts with previous examples, in that it is neither western nor provincial. Indeed, it displays a very slick corporate image and was selected to play up the high technology nature of the product. Signage could be achieved in etched or painted glass, relating to the look of solar collection panels, and further use of the logo could be made in stationery, baseball caps, truck identification, jackets, and business forms.
SKYHAWK HELICOPTERS

As with Solaire, Skyhawk Helicopters requires a high technology corporate image consistent with the overall look of the air travel industry. The hawk symbol was requisite to the solution of this problem, and extreme efforts toward abstraction of that symbol gave way to a somewhat naturalistic solution which I coupled with a typeface chosen for its implied motion and consistency with the high-tech look: Serpentine Bold Italic. The logo and mark could be used in tandem on the helicopters and service vehicles, tickets, flight bags, luggage tags, and pilot's caps. The mark alone could be adapted to wall paper and fabric to be used for curtains, jacket linings, and flight attendants' uniforms.
VALLEY METALS

The products of this corporation include sheet metal, rebar, and metal fabrication. I wanted a strong, solid image for Valley Metals, and was able to combine a westernish typeface with the name for a successful synthesis of appropriateness at two levels. Lubalin Graph Bold was slightly modified for the logo, and the trademark was derived from the VM initials. The result is exactly what I wanted: a strong corporate look that echoes metal products and the West. Outdoor signage could be a low, massive metal block of aluminum, bronze, or iron, chemically treated to contrast logo and trademark with ground. Sheet metal produced at the plant would be stamped with the trademark, and a similar look could be applied to business cards, which could be lightweight aluminum, stamped with trademark, and printed with additional information. Business papers, vehicle identification decals, parking stickers, annual reports, advertising campaigns, and work-clothing design would provide unlimited possibilities for the various adaptations and explorations of this image.
ANALYSIS AND SUMMARY

My intent with this project was to unite the community of Hurricane, Utah, with graphic imagery that would create a strong local identity, corporate credibility, and environmental and historical perspective. Eight separate identities are treated, and preliminary roughs are illustrated along with finished designs and colored indication of specific design adaptations. Each separate design has its own look and integrity, and all are consistent with each other when taken as a town package. Designs, as well as their adaptations, reflect a concern for the natural imagery of Hurricane, yet convey a strong corporate profile. The relationship of these designs to Hurricane’s roots and natural history creates a synergism that will become increasingly important to the design profession, the consuming public, and the environment.
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1978-1980 Master of Fine Arts in advertising design, Utah State University, Logan, Utah, Professor Jon Anderson, committee chairman.


Shows:


April 1978 Weber State College All Utah Student Art Show, honorable mention. Ogden, Utah.
Employment History:

1978-79 Production artist: Instructional Graphics, Utah State University, Logan, Utah. Illustration, design, silk screening, cartooning, paste-up, type specification, lettering, general photography, copy work, and general office duties.


1971-74 Editor and Creative Director: The Bobcat News Journal, Edinburg High School, Edinburg, Texas. Pat Lkein-Gray, Advisor. Total control over monthly tabloid news magazine production, included content, story assignment, writing, editing, copy-reading, headline writing, layout, design, illustration, and all photographic work, including developing and printing, paste-up, sales, and cash flow.

Honors, Awards, and Offices:

Outstanding Young Women of America, 1978.
Vice President, Honors Program, Utah State University, 1976-77.
National Merit Scholarship Finalist, 1975.
Outstanding Senior Girl, Kiwanis Club Award, 1975.
President, National Honor Society, Edinburg High School, 1974-75.